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Mr. DURBIN. I will ask the Senator from Nevada a further question. Didn't we also have a similar precedent when Senator MCCAIN and Senator Kerry were leaders in an effort to finally establish diplomatic recognition of Vietnam and normalize relations? This was a bipartisan effort to try to move us beyond a painful chapter in our history which cost so many American lives. That, too, was bipartisan, as I recall.

Mr. REID. And if anyone should have some ill feelings about Vietnam, JOHN MCCAIN, who came to the House of Representatives with the Senator and me, was in a prison camp for 5 years and 4 of those years were in solitary confinement. John Kerry was shot, was wounded—highly decorated, but he had a little beef with the Vietnamese. And they worked together because they thought it would be good for our country to reestablish relations with that country.

So my mind is—I repeat—clouded with the experience I have in this body with leaders such as Mark Hatfield, a Republican, who would never ever consider anything like this.

I am dumbfounded that 47 of my colleagues would sign a letter. Last week they were over here, as I said, jumping up and down and cheering the Prime Minister of Israel because he was denigrating what was going on in Iran—you can't negotiate with these people—and now they are sending a letter to the same people whom they were cheering against just a week ago?

Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with the time equally divided in the usual form, and with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant Democratic leader.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF BLOODY SUNDAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last Saturday marked the 50th anniversary of what has come to be known as Bloody Sunday. In March of 1965, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, then a young man fresh out of college, and Rev. Hosea Williams led 600 brave civil rights activists across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL.

These courageous men and women, and children marching with them, were marching in pursuit of the most funda-

mental right—the right preservative of all others—the right to vote. What they received that day, however, were brutal beatings from police batons as State troopers turned them back and chased them down.

A few days later, President Lyndon B. Johnson addressed the Nation and called on Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act. Within months, the legislation was signed into law—guaranteeing that the fundamental right to vote would not be restricted through clever State and local schemes, such as poll taxes and literacy tests.

I was proud to join Congressman LEWIS on a trip to Selma about 10 years ago for a ceremonial walk across the bridge to mark the 40th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. As we marched on a Sunday morning in the footsteps of the civil rights giants, we celebrated a bill that has often been called the most significant civil rights law ever passed by Congress. Little did we know that 8 years later, in 2013, the Supreme Court would strike down a major provision of that law.

In *Shelby County v. Holder*, by a 5-to-4 vote, a divided Supreme Court struck down the provision of the Voting Rights Act that required certain jurisdictions to preclear changes to their voting laws with the Department of Justice. The decision effectively gutted the Voting Rights Act.

In the aftermath of the *Shelby County* decision, several State legislatures pushed through discriminatory and onerous restrictions on voting that previously would have required Department of Justice clearance.

We have heard disturbing stories of a 93-year-old veteran and a nearly 70-year-old doctor who were turned away from the polls in Texas because their IDs did not meet the specifications of an onerous new State law. We heard about Florida's faulty voter verification efforts that disproportionately flag Hispanic citizens for removal from the voter rolls. And we have heard how the elimination of out-of-precinct voting and cuts to early voting impacted minority voters in North Carolina.

It is hard to believe that 50 years after Selma, we are watching State legislatures pass legislation restricting opportunities to vote in America. None of us want to subscribe or endorse voter fraud—not a person on either side of the aisle—but this goes far beyond it.

As chairman of the Judiciary subcommittee on the Constitution, I held hearings in Florida and Ohio, where they were enacting restrictive laws to limit opportunities to vote—limiting the time you can vote, requiring IDs.

In each of those States, I called as my first witnesses elected officials of both political parties. I asked, in both States, the same question to the first panel of witnesses: What has happened in your State by way of voter fraud that has led you to restrict the opportunity to vote in your States of Ohio and Florida? The answer was: Nothing—nothing.

Then we discussed how many people have actually been prosecuted for voter fraud that led to this tightening of the laws and limiting the opportunity to vote. In Ohio, the answer was: We think in the last 10 years, a few people might have been prosecuted. This clearly was not a problem in need of a solution. This was clearly an effort made in these State legislatures to restrict the opportunity to vote for certain Americans. Why? If you believe in this country, if you believe in democracy, if you believe in the right to vote, why do so many State legislatures—under the guidance of a group called ALEC—why are they changing their laws to restrict the right to vote? Clearly it is because they want certain people to find it more difficult to vote.

When I chaired this subcommittee and I had this series of hearings, we heard over and over again that these laws have a disproportionate negative impact on lower income individuals, minorities, youth, elderly, and other vulnerable populations.

I wish that 50 years after Bloody Sunday, our society had reached a point where the protections of the Voting Rights Act were no longer necessary. But we have seen in State after State that we still need the protections of the law, or people—good American citizens—will be denied their opportunity to cast a vote in an election.

So in order to truly honor the foot soldiers of Bloody Sunday, we have to do more than vote for congressional medals. We have to work together to pass the Voting Rights Amendment Act to ensure the Federal Government is once again able to fully protect the fundamental right to vote for all American citizens.

The Voting Rights Amendment Act, which Senator LEAHY, Senator COONS, and I plan to reintroduce soon, will undo the damage of the *Shelby County* decision. Our bill will restore the Voting Rights Act by updating the formula that determines which jurisdictions must preclear changes to their voting practices with the Justice Department.

In 2006, Congress reauthorized the Voting Rights Act with an overwhelming bipartisan vote. The spirit of Bloody Sunday—the spirit of Selma, AL—was alive and well 9 years ago, when both political parties stood up and said: We are both going to endorse it. It is the right thing to do.

Mr. President, 390 Members in the House out of 435 voted for it, and 98 Senators—from both political parties—voted to reauthorize it, 9 years ago. Congress, after all the hearings—21 of them—with more than 90 witnesses testifying, produced a record that exceeded 15,000 pages, and the bill was solid in the law.

We recognized then that despite the progress we have made in the years since that famous march, there still was unlawful and unfair discrimination against Americans who wanted to exercise their right to vote.

The Supreme Court ignored our work, and in the Shelby County decision overturned a key section of this law. That is why we need to once again step up on a bipartisan basis to pass this Voting Rights Amendment Act.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I might also reflect on that victory 50 years ago and think about another civil rights milestone that we have an opportunity to act on this week—this week—in Washington.

Two weeks ago, the Judiciary Committee favorably reported the nomination of Loretta Lynch to the full Senate. If confirmed by the Senate, Ms. Lynch will become the first African-American woman to serve as Attorney General of the United States.

In January, she gave moving testimony to the committee about sitting on her father's shoulders as a young girl so she could witness civil rights activists planning sit-ins and marches in the early 1960s.

Ms. Lynch is incredible. She is so well qualified that in the course of 2 days of hearings, there was virtually no negative question asked of her. She handled it so well.

She has now waited 121 days for confirmation by the Senate. Loretta Lynch has waited longer than any nominee for Attorney General in the last 30 years. She languishes on the calendar. It is embarrassing to think that after all of the speeches and all of the reflection of this last weekend on the progress we have made in civil rights in America, this woman, whose nomination in and of itself is a civil rights victory, is being held up in the Senate for no obvious reason.

As Congressman LEWIS said in a recent letter to the Judiciary Committee, Ms. Lynch "recognizes the value of all people and has fought vigorously to ensure their equal protection under the law." JOHN LEWIS said: "She will carry the torch of justice to help make the United States a more perfect union."

Mr. President, we are not a perfect union. We will strive throughout our history to reach that almost impossible goal. There is a lot of work we need to do, and each generation must accept it. First we need to confirm Loretta Lynch, and let's do it soon. Let's do it this week so she can lead the Department of Justice and continue the fight to move our Nation forward. And we must restore the Voting Rights Act so the Justice Department has the tools it needs to ensure the efforts of those who marched 50 years ago.

As I said before, no other Attorney General nominee in the last three decades has had to wait this long to receive a confirmation vote on the floor of the Senate. By way of comparison, the Democratic-controlled Senate confirmed Michael Mukasey as Attorney General 53 days after his nomination was announced.

Ms. Lynch was reported out of the Judiciary Committee on February 26 in a bipartisan vote. On that day, the Judiciary Committee also reported out the nomination of Michelle Lee to be Director of the Patent and Trademark Office as well as a bill called the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act.

The majority leader has scheduled a vote on Ms. Lee for today, and he has said the Senate will vote this week on the trafficking legislation. Why is Ms. Lynch's nomination being kept in limbo while these other matters are being scheduled ahead of her? There is no reason to stall the process for Ms. Lynch any further. The majority leader should schedule a confirmation vote without delay.

When we have that confirmation vote, I will be proud to vote in support of Loretta Lynch. She is a nominee of outstanding qualifications, integrity, and judgment. She has been confirmed twice before by the Senate to serve as the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and she has served in that position with distinction. She has prosecuted some of the highest profile cases in the country, and she has received widespread praise for her diligence and her no-nonsense approach.

Ms. Lynch is a prosecutor's prosecutor. But her resume stands out for other reasons as well. She received undergraduate and law degrees from Harvard. She has private sector experience at prestigious law firms, including working as a defense attorney and on civil matters. And she has international experience working for the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Through it all, Ms. Lynch has never forgotten her roots, growing up as the daughter of a minister and a school librarian in North Carolina. Loretta Lynch's life is a testament to the fact that in America, glass ceilings can be shattered through hard work, perseverance, and outstanding performance on the job. Now the Senate is in the position to confirm this historic nominee to serve as our next Attorney General—once her floor vote gets scheduled.

I think Ms. Lynch will do an excellent job. But don't take it from me. Let me read some of the praise for Ms. Lynch that has come from individuals and groups that have endorsed her.

Here is what the president of the National District Attorneys Association, Michael Moore, said about her:

On behalf of the National District Attorneys Association, representing 2500 elected and appointed District Attorneys across the United States as well as 40,000 assistant district attorneys, I write in strong support of Loretta Lynch's nomination to lead the Department of Justice as the next Attorney General of the United States. As prosecutors facing challenges in the field from violent crime, to human trafficking, to gangs and drug traffickers, our membership feels that Ms. Lynch understands the operational nature of these challenges and will be a strong independent voice at the helm of the Department.

Here is a letter signed by 25 former U.S. attorneys, both Republicans and Democrats, including Patrick Fitzgerald and Scott Lassar from my home State of Illinois. They said:

We are all former United States Attorneys. Some of us served in Republican administrations, some in Democratic administrations. We all share a deep commitment to the rule of law and an abiding respect for the Department of Justice. . . . We firmly believe that Ms. Lynch will make an outstanding Attorney General. . . . we believe that Ms. Lynch has the experience, temperament, independence, integrity, and judgment to immediately assume this critically important position.

Law enforcement groups support Ms. Lynch, too. Here's a letter from the President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Richard Beary. He said:

The IACP believes that Ms. Lynch's years of service have clearly demonstrated that she has the qualifications and experience necessary to be an effective leader of the U.S. Department of Justice . . . The IACP urges you to confirm Ms. Lynch's nomination rapidly.

Here is a letter from the president of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, representing 26,000 active and retired federal law enforcement officers. He expressed his full support for Ms. Lynch and said:

FLEOA stands behind her proven leadership and her support for those who investigate and enforce the federal statutes. . . . Her accomplishments and her leadership continue to resonate in the law enforcement community, and she possesses the requisite institutional knowledge that is required of the position of Attorney General.

These are just some of the endorsements that Ms. Lynch has received. She has also been endorsed by other prosecutor and law enforcement groups, bar associations, business leaders, civil rights organizations, and former top Justice Department officials from both parties.

As I mentioned earlier, this past weekend marked the 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday when 600 civil rights marchers were beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL. Our Nation's conscience was shocked by the image of JOHN LEWIS, now a Congressman from the State of Georgia, being beaten and badly injured on Bloody Sunday by troopers with nightsticks.

JOHN LEWIS has spent his life marching for the cause of justice. He speaks with a voice of moral authority that all of us should heed. Several weeks ago Congressman LEWIS sent a letter to the Judiciary Committee in support of Ms. Lynch.

I want to read an extended excerpt from the letter I mentioned earlier. Congressman LEWIS said:

With over 30 years of legal experience, Ms. Lynch is unwavering in her efforts to create a more just society. A Harvard graduate with an extensive career in public service, private practice, and academia, she recognizes the value of all people and has fought vigorously to ensure their equal protection under the law.

She will carry the torch of justice to help make the United States a more perfect